

MINUTES
NIOSH Board of Scientific Counselors
Washington, DC
May 10, 2007

Introductions, Announcements, and Approval of Minutes

Dr. Sarah Felknor, Chair, called the 49th meeting of the NIOSH Board of Scientific Counselors to order. Other attending Board members were: Mr. Scott Schneider and Drs. Benjamin Amick, William Bunn, Catherine Heaney, Pamela Hymel, Hester Lipscomb, Linda McCauley, John Mulhausen, Gurumurthy Ramachandran, and Robert Reville. The NIOSH Director, Division Directors, NIOSH staff, and members of the public also attended. The minutes from the 48th meeting on October 18, 2006, were reviewed and approved.

Director's Remarks

John Howard, Director, NIOSH, welcomed eight new Board members and encouraged their active participation, stating that NIOSH is in good shape despite a limited budget. Partners, other agencies, and the U.S. Congress are actively engaged in NIOSH activities.

Personnel Changes: Dr. Howard stated that a new Director for the NIOSH Spokane Research Laboratory would be announced soon. Mr. Max Kiefer, formerly of the Office of Emergency Preparedness in Atlanta will be appointed permanently in the NIOSH Denver office to enhance contacts in the western areas of the United States. Mr. Ken Martinez is now serving as acting emergency response coordinator. Dr. John Piacentino recently joined the Office of the Director in Washington, D.C. as a Senior Scientist and Dr. Dori Reissman has joined the same office working in disaster mental health issues. Mr. Larry Rhodes is now the new administrative officer in the Atlanta office and Dr. Jim Newhall is now Director of the Office of Extramural Programs (OEP). Dr. Michael Galvin, former Director of OEP, has been appointed as Special Programs Coordinator for World Trade Center grant activities.

Program Portfolio: Dr. Howard stated that the NIOSH program portfolio currently has 30 programs including eight industry sectors as well as cross sector programs. There also are emphasis areas in economics, engineering controls, and surveillance.

Dr. Sid Soderholm, Office of the Director, NIOSH, gave an update on the National Occupational Research Agenda, listing the various industry sector councils and topics. There are now 240 participants on industry sector councils, one-third of whom are NIOSH staff. All councils have met once or twice. The agriculture/forestry/fishing council has divided into work groups to concentrate on fishing separate from other agricultural issues. The health care council has begun writing a report on research needs while the mining council also met recently to map out research directions. Services (with a sub-council in public safety) has divided along subsector areas to establish priorities and then look at cross cutting issues. Transportation, manufacturing, and retail trade councils also have met. Dr. Soderholm suggested that the Board receive brief

sector council reports at each meeting to help determine where NIOSH can provide leadership or support in that sector.

Program Evaluation: Dr. Howard stated that NIOSH is continuing its commitment to independent evaluation, using the National Academies of Science (NAS) for that purpose. The process is helping to educate NIOSH staff on how to structure a program with definable outcomes. Dr. Ray Sinclair, Office of the Director, NIOSH, gave a brief update on current NAS activities stating that eight NIOSH programs are currently under review and six more are being prepared for review. Reports on the mining and hearing programs have been released. Among the similarities between the mining and hearing are recommendations to improve strategic planning, work more with partners, improve surveillance, and enhance communication and cooperation between intramural and extramural researchers. Among the dissimilarities, mining had more recommendations on diffusion of innovations. Dr. Sinclair stated that the NAS reviews offer a unique opportunity to look systematically at expert judgment given that so many programs are being reviewed at one time. The process will allow NIOSH to contribute to the peer-reviewed literature on program evaluation.

Discussion: Dr. Howard requested advice from Board on whether the expenditure of resources and funds for the NAS reviews is a good investment for NIOSH. The Board echoed Dr. Howard's concern about funding but supported the NAS review process as a good marketing strategy to raise the profile of the science and practice of occupational safety and health. Dr. Howard suggested that the review was warranted after 10 years of research prioritization under NORA along with the interest of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in systematic program review. Dr. Howard speculated that OMB program review is likely to continue regardless of the administration or political party in power. The Board stated that it is difficult to collect outcome data and reminded NIOSH to continue efforts capture outcomes more systematically. Dr. Howard stated that a more effective budget for measurement needs to be established. One Board member noted that the NAS framework committee struggled with outcome measures, recognizing that research often only demonstrates intermediate outcomes.

Initiatives: Dr. Howard noted that progress on the NIOSH Prevention Through Design initiative will be reported at a future Board meeting and added that the initiative has received much positive input from the American Society of Safety Engineers and the National Safety Council. Dr. Howard also stated that the NIOSH Occupational Exposure Sampling Strategy Manual, published in 1977, will be updated. Among other initiatives are advances in real time exposure monitoring including the personal dust monitor, a mold detector, and an "explosivity" meter. The NIOSH Asbestos initiative also is active with a "Roadmap" for future research released for public comment. Several NORA sector councils are involved in that initiative. The Roadmap outlines the many scientific uncertainties that still exist about asbestos that affect both the workplace and the community at large. Release of Roadmap brought immediate responses from several agencies potentially interested in collaboration and interest from the U.S. Congress.

Budget: The NIOSH Fiscal Year 2007 budget is \$254.1 million, reflecting is \$1.2 million decrease from 2006. After subtractions for CDC overhead and programs, the NIOSH budget is expected to be \$247.5 million. \$1.1 million is reserved for individual learning accounts and another \$1.5 million was designated for a small business innovation research contract. \$1.3

million was directed to the CDC Office of Workforce and Career Development and \$2.7 million is designated for “Most Efficient Organizations” (MEOs), an OMB initiative to centralize similar activities under one management unit (e.g., all libraries report to one manager). Libraries, writer/editors, and statistical assistants all have separate MEOs. Twelve FTEs from NIOSH were transferred to CDC in support of MEO management changes. The Board asked if NIOSH saves any money from the MEO process. Dr. Howard stated that analysis has yet to be accomplished.

Awards: Dr. Howard stated that the Alice Hamilton Awards ceremony was held on May 1, 2007, including for scientific excellence and the James P. Keogh Award for Outstanding Service in Occupational Safety and Health. In addition, the Bullard-Sherwood Research-to-Practice Award was presented for excellence in applying research to occupational illness and injury prevention. Complete information about the 2007 awardees can be found on the NIOSH website.

In closing, Dr. Howard noted that the medical monitoring and treatment programs associated with the World Trade Center tragedy continue to occupy much NIOSH time and resources. Dr. Howard stated that NIOSH is helping to administer the largest medical monitoring program ever conducted in the United States. The treatment component program is a new challenge for NIOSH.

Firefighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program Update

Dr. Thomas Hales, Division of Surveillance, Hazard Evaluations, and Field Studies, and Ms. Dawn Castillo, Division of Safety Research, provided an update of the program. Dr. Hales presented information on deaths from cardio-vascular disease (CVD) and Ms. Castillo presented information on deaths from traumatic injuries. Program background, investigation protocols, information products, and future directions were briefly reviewed. Ms. Castillo also noted meetings with the staff of Senator John Kerry, following some negative press, to explain the purposes of the program and how it differs from law enforcement or fault-finding investigations.

Discussion: The Board questioned whether data are available on changes in fatalities, injuries, or efficiency/productivity that may have been influenced by the program. Ms. Castillo stated that quantitative measures are being developed but the program needs to enhance collaborations with stakeholder groups. The Board also asked whether improved safety equipment makes the job easier to perform. Ms. Castillo stated that enhanced equipment may compromise safety at times if the firefighter stays in a fire longer but there are no systematic data on this speculation. The Board also asked whether there were career versus volunteer differences in investigation selection. Dr. Hales stated that about half of the investigations are career or volunteer. The Board suggested preparing a publication on the program and the investigation approach to share with other programs (if time and resources are available). The Board also questioned whether fire departments have been able to institute CVD programs outlined in the NIOSH publication. Dr. Hales stated that the International Association of Fire Fighters has been advocating for CVD prevention programs for a decade, encouraging departments to set and enforce programs. The departments, however, often lack sufficient funds for the programs. Dr. Hales stated that new NORA research is being proposed to do cost effectiveness analysis of CVD programs to try to demonstrate a return on the investment of scarce funds. A potential advantage of instituting such

programs in the fire service could be a requirement for members to participate as a condition of employment. The Board asked whether the departments can be encouraged to do their own analysis and investigations. Ms. Castillo stated there is an advantage for NIOSH to be the independent party conducting investigations. The Board questioned whether other industries would benefit from the model. Ms. Castillo stated that the fire fighter investigation program is built on the existing Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program model administered by the Division of Safety Research. The general model targets a topic, performs a series of investigations, and then summarizes the results and develops recommendations.

Training Grant Program Review: Report of the Working Group

Dr. David Deeter and Ms. Katherine Kirkland, of the Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics, presented an overview of a draft report of a working group charged with examining the current NIOSH training grant program structure and make suggestions to improve the program for the future. The report follows the outline of a logic model and addresses resource needs, essential activities, customers and stakeholders, and both short- and long-term outcomes. Dr. Deeter stated that the working group is confident that the report can serve as roadmap for future training programs. Overall, the report recognizes NIOSH accomplishments in training but suggests areas for better focus in future years. Among the recommendations, Dr. Deeter emphasized flexibility over time as needs change. The group also recommended funding training beyond the core areas, as NIOSH has done in the past, and supporting undergraduate programs. The group suggested NIOSH not support post-doctoral training for non-physicians because of limited resources and because there may be other funding mechanisms for post-doctoral training. Similar recommendations were made for physician post-occupational-residency research training. The group also recommended not supporting certificate programs because trainees or their employers often will pay for that type of training themselves. Limited distance learning was suggested on an as-needed basis.

Discussion: The Board questioned why conservation/green environments was included as a long-term outcome for occupational safety and health. Dr. Deeter stated that many exposures involve both the work place and the environment in general and that occupational safety and health professionals should be able to address all types of exposures. The Board also questioned how outcomes would be measured. Ms. Kirkland stated that devising measures was not feasible within the timeframe and charge given to the working group.

Dr. Howard requested the Board form a working group to review the training report for potential endorsement by the Board. Dr. Howard requested that the working group return with a recommendation to the full Board at a future meeting.

Noise-Induced Hearing Loss Research Program: Response to National Academies of Science Review

Dr. Guner Gurtunca, Director, Pittsburgh Research Laboratory, presented an overview of the

NIOSH Hearing Loss Research Program, the recommendations from the NAS review, and the NIOSH response to the recommendations. Dr. Gurtunca enumerated strategic goals in response to NAS recommendations to enhance leadership, recruitment, use of outside expertise, strategic planning, surveillance, intervention effectiveness, coordination and collaboration, laboratory accreditation, engineering controls, and extramural funding. NIOSH aims to develop future projects to fit the strategic goals to address some outcomes by 2016. Overall, Dr. Gurtunca stated that the NAS exercise has increased communication among noise researchers in different Divisions or Laboratories, which is a good immediate outcome. Dr. Gurtunca plans to present a strategic plan to stakeholders when completed.

Discussion: The Board commended NIOSH work in this area and encouraged more work on dissemination and follow-up to determine whether the disseminated information is actually used. Dr. Gurtunca noted there are dissemination opportunities in mining because the stakeholders recognize the demand. The Board also encouraged working with extramural grantees to encourage project proposals that fit the strategic plan. The Board requested a review of the written response to the NAS recommendations and the strategic plan when they are in final draft form.

Future Meetings

Work groups were established to examine the utility of NIOSH information products, review the report of the training work group, and evaluate NIOSH responses to NAS program recommendations. Nanotechnology and budget updates were topics requested for future meetings.

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing summary of minutes is accurate and complete.

Sarah A. Felknor, Dr.P.H., M.S., Chair

Date